



(Continued.)

CHAPTER XVII.

Is He Your Husband?

UNCLE BILLY recounted his experiences to the women.

What he lacked in elegant phraseology he made up in simple directness.

"Frances, do you know what this means?" said Diana excitedly.

"Why, Mr. Cranford is in trouble."

"Girl alive, it means that they haven't got them! And they believe he knows, and they've carried him off to force the truth from him. Oh, we'll beat them yet!"

"But where are they?"

"I shall find that out as soon as I can talk."

So that was it? Uncle Billy nodded.

"How we goin' to get Mr. Cranford out?" which was far more important to him than any treasure he could call to mind.

"Why didn't you let me know at once—the morning after? All this time wasted! Oh, if I could only walk! But I must sit here helpless. Go back to the hotel immediately and ask for Mr. Cranford and be sure that you see him. Under no circumstances let him know that you are aware of anything wrong."

"The hotel village is talking."

"Never mind that. Say to him that Miss Wynne wishes to see him here after dinner."

"Rubber heels?"

"What's that?"

"One of the chaps wore new rubber heels. It's him. All right. I'll tell him to come out after supper."

"That and nothing more."

"The detective from Watertown?"

"Never mind the detective. Don't have anything to do with him. I'm something of a detective myself, Uncle Billy."

"You, Miss Wynne? By jings!"

"I have hinted that I was trying to prevent a crime. It cannot matter now if I tell you a few facts. But you must promise to keep these to yourself. I am a secret agent of the United States customs. Now, go quickly. And to-morrow I'll tell you all there is to it, and you shall have your hundred dollars gladly. Time is most important now. Mr. Cranford must be liberated. Come tomorrow afternoon about this time. Please go at once."

"All right, Miss Wynne, tomorrow."

"He was told at the hotel that Mr. Cranford and his friend were across the river fishing in the bay. So Uncle Billy sat down on the dock and waited. Fishing! Some nerve after desperately abducting a man and hiding him somewhere."

The old guide's blood began to boil. The nerve of it, right here in this peaceful village! And when finally his patience was rewarded he strenuously resisted the desire to fling himself upon the fishing party, the fisherman is the culprit of the boat."

Uncle Billy grudgingly admitted that the catch was a good one.

"Nice catch, eh?" said the young man as he stepped toward Uncle Billy. "Not bad."

"There you are! You guides will never come out squintly in the open and say that the other fellows got a good catch. It's my best jemmy!"

"Mr. Cranford, Miss Diana Wynne wants to see you at the farm right after supper."

"And who is Miss Diana Wynne?"

"Bitter go 'n' find out. With this advice the guide turned and made off. Mr. Cranford frowned.

"Fugly, you two will have to go out back. I've got something equally important on hand."

"All right, Donny. We'll feed him and wash his face, and hands for him. That cistern was a stroke of luck."

"Perhaps. Diana? What did she want? What did she know? Had Cranford made a confidant of her? Later he told Smead.

"Go and find out—find out what she is doing up here. You don't get anywhere I'll go on my feet tomorrow."

"I shan't get anywhere. You may take my word for that. She's a queer hound. I'm all at sea over this fuke. Cranford, I swear, hasn't got them."

"Then he left them with her. I'm beginning to get sick of the whole deal. Why couldn't you have taken them to New York, Boston, or Philadelphia? In this hole!"

"I was watched day and night, save when I could slip away. That's why I brought nothing over; these things I built up my game like a chess player. Not a flaw anywhere, and now this fuke. A fine joke if she has them. But I don't see how. Who'd think? Well, Cranford must be liberated as soon as we can safely go about it. His guide acts as if he suspected something, and that fool of a detective has been watching me."

"I propose to teach Cranford a lesson."

"Piffle! Can't you see that he's far more dangerous than you are? Did you note the cool way he went down the ladder? Ah, some new arrivals!"

Two old men came in.

One of them must have been very handsome in his youth. There was still some evidence of this fact in the nose, the eyes, the mouth.

His hair was snow white. Smead hastily turned his back and went into the bedroom. The son stared astonished at the tettering door. Now what?

Smead's retreat, however, did not serve. An hour later he met the white haired gentleman as the latter was issuing from the dining room. He paused, adjusted his eyeglasses and looked Smead up and down, from his shoes to his head, with insolent amusement.

Smead passed on into the dining room, fury and death in his heart.

For this was the one man on earth who had dared to tell him, Michael Smead, truths, point blank, in dictio-

as elegant as the voice was hard and cold. Nearly thirty years ago.

"Simmons," he heard the old man say to his companion, "Simmons, I haven't played a game of billiards in years. Suppose we try a hand."

Smead ate his dinner without relish. He was so confused that he did not question the old man's presence here or inquire into what his errand might be. He could only think that he had permitted him to stare him out of countenance.

"Know that man?" asked the son.

"None of your business."

"Ah, I see!" bantering. "He knows you."

Smead left the table without his usual cup of coffee.

He felt harassed, like a rat driven into a corner. Why had he stopped like a rascal and given the old man the opportunity? All right, he thought grimly. Let him smile. That smile would never balance the hurt he (Smead) had given.

"Fagin, watch him carefully tonight. He may take it into his head to rough it."

"Why not? Getting tender, Donny?"

"No, Fagin, but I'm rather sick of the whole business. Things have turned up unexpectedly. Sick at heart, if you want to know the truth, over the past, over the future. I'd like to have a whack at living straight, doing honest work if they'd let me. South America or South Africa, where they don't know me. Fagin, I'm Smead's son."

Fagin had ordered coffee, but he forgot to drink it.

An accomplished rogue who did not want to be a rogue any longer.

A year ago nothing had worried him. Money had come easily. At war with society, but at peace with himself.

And now this unaccountable upheaval in his work. Had the slight of Diana set it in motion? Diana, straight and honest as light, "brave as the morning!" Might it not be the constant thought of some one else whom he had wronged carelessly?

A blind, cowardly rage had drawn him into this coil. Could he walk straight with all these ghosts trooping beside him? Like father, like son—was that to be till the end of the chapter? To break her spirit, to humble her pride—as if a woman like she was would ever surrender to coercion! He found himself at the farmhouse door. He knocked.

"Miss Wynne?" he inquired.

"She's waiting in the parlor, sir. This way."

He entered the room, knowing that he was beaten.

She was as beautiful as Palmer Vecchio's "Santa Barbara." With all his petty villainies, his makeshifts, his follies, one thing always burned clearly and purely in his heart—his love for this young woman who was gazing at him with critical, unfriendly eyes.

"You sent for me, Di?"

"Yes," crisply. "I want Mr. Cranford liberated at once. I am the person who is responsible for your present embarrassment."

"You, Di?" He was genuinely astonished.

"Myself. For a long time I have been in the secret service. I usually pose as a stewardess on the north Atlantic liners. I was sent for by one whom we both know and told what had taken place. I gave my word that you should not succeed. A sneak's business I believe you call it, with an ironical smile. Your exploits have been of the daredevil kind, all save this last one. You had courage. It was great sport. I really believe you never stopped to look deeply into the things you have done. But this was base and low and despicable."

"So it was, Di," calmly, "but quite like me."

She started and shot him a puzzled glance.

"Nature," he went on, "is the greatest user of them all. Think of what she charges on the loan of a small folly! And I am terribly in debt to her. Don't look puzzled, Di. It isn't nauter. You have beaten me. Doubtless you have them all. If that is the case I'm rather glad of it. Give them back to her. Tell her the rogue is sorry—sorry that he ever crossed her path—from the very bottom of his soul!"

Her eyes grew wider and wider.

"I'll go out and release Cranford. He fooled us neatly. I never dreamed that you were in this. You're a wonderful young woman. Tomorrow—South America. Di, I've been Smead's son. Michael Smead's. A rare handicap. I'm not whining. What's done can't be undone."

"If I could only believe you!" breathlessly.

"There you are—a liar and a rogue! Who'd believe him? Wolf! Wolf! Too many times I've cried it. Now no one hears."

"Frances!" Diana called.

The young man laid back against the wall, his hands clenching at it.

The door at the far side of the fire place opened, and she who was called Frances entered quietly.

She was white, but not more so than the man who stared at her. A tableau in which each pour heart and nothing but the thunder of the heart. The young man was first to find his speech.

"Di, I marvel at your completeness. Can you forgive me? If you could only have seen into my mind! I never dreamed—I was selfish and thoughtless—each of these things meant to you. I was where I had always lived. Can't you see? I was like a jar in a potter's oven—mud buried."

"Don, you were the first human being I ever loved. I made you out a fairy prince, all my own. And you lied to me—everybody lied to me. But your lies cut deepest and will be last to heal. I forgive you, and if you

mean what you say I will do more than forgive; I will help."

A deep breath; then he spoke.

"And can you forgive, too, Frances? Can you forgive the rogue who tried to break your heart—the rogue who will this night pass out of your life forever? Di, the other night I said you were one of the two things I loved. Frances is the other. A fine joke, isn't it?"

"Frances, it is true, and the knowledge of it is the thing which has started to work havoc or redemption, as you will. I'm going to live straight, and if I win out shall I come back? Yes? No? So be it. But at least I want to go away with the thought that you have forgiven me."

With her eyes she hated and despised him, but her ears were traitors. The sound of that musical voice was more potent than reason, more subtle than drug. She had thrown away everything because of it.

"Why did you take them?"

"I wanted to humble your pride. I wanted you where I could have some power over you. If you were penniless there would be hope for me."

The sound of stumbling feet, and Cranford, haggard and begrimed, staggered into the parlor.

Immediately he flung himself upon the younger Smead. Pinning him against the wall with the last bit of strength he possessed. Cranford looked over his shoulder at Diana.

"Who is this man?" he cried hoarsely.

"Is he your husband?"

With her eyes closed and her heart beating wildly, Diana answered slowly. "He is Donald Smead, my brother. I am the daughter of Michael Smead."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Storm Passes.

Cranford released the enemy, stared at him, at Diana, at the other young woman he had never seen before.

Her brother! He laughed, toppled into a chair and bent his aching head to his knees. He was hanging on to things by a mere rag of nervous energy. The daughter of Michael Smead!

That morning, by the aid of what remained of his last candle, he had discovered a loose plank in the side of

Her Brother! He Laughed, Toppled into a Chair and Bent His Aching Head to His Knees.

the cistern, and all day long, with but a few intervals of rest, he had tugged and twisted and pulled and kicked.

The plank gave outward at 5 o'clock or thereabouts. But two more hours necessary to admit of his passing out into the cellar and thence to freedom.

Followed a stumbling, staggering journey in the dark, ignorant of how far he was away, persistently onward to the west, still crimson and purple. In all he had come six miles—to find that the man was her brother and that she was the daughter of Michael Smead!

"Di, I'll be getting on my way."

The younger Smead straightened his collar and tie mechanically. With Cranford at liberty, he sensed the danger in which his father and companion stood. He must at least give them fair warning.

"Do you mean it all, Don?"

"About going away, of trying hereafter to walk straight? From the bottom of my soul, girl. It doesn't pay. South America. Will you wish me good luck?"

"Yes, yes! Good luck! I shall always be thinking of you."

She stretched out her hand.

Donald would always be to her the Faun—handsome, charming, whimsical, merry. Diana had never seen her father till the day of her arrival in New York, but Donald had visited her at the convent many times.

The young man offered his hand to the other woman, while Diana gazed, dim eyed, at the huddled man in the chair.

"Not yet," said Frances, shrinking back. "God speed you and God guard you, Donald! I can't touch your hand just now! There are so many black things between it and mine."

"True enough. But if I win out?"

"How shall we know?" wearily.

"When I come back it will be written on my face and in my eyes." He picked up his hat, looked down at Cranford, smiled oddly, passed from the room and gently shut the door.

(To Be Continued.)

Cambridge Has 11,000 of Its Men at Front.

London, Dec. 1.—Over 11,000 Cambridge men who are fighting with the colors, according to the university's latest war list. Of these men, 614 have been killed, 900 wounded and 123 missing or prisoners of war. Three have won the Victoria Cross and others have received medals for distinguished conduct. Trinity heads the colleges with 2,500 soldiers and Pembroke follows with 1,052.

EXMAS ROPING AND WREATHS OF LAUREL

JOHN RECK & SON.

Exchanged Prisoners To Get Steam Baths

Stockholm, Sweden, Dec. 1.—Preparations have been completed for the resumption of the exchange of wounded prisoners between Russia and Germany. The transfer will be carried out as before without any modification of the original plan, but several innovations have been introduced which will make the long journey more comfortable for the wounded and additional sanitary precautions have been taken. One of these is a new disinfecting station at Haparanda where all arrivals will receive a steam bath, while their clothes are washed and disinfected. Since it has been found that the locomotives and steam heater can only supply enough heat for two cars, the trains, during the cold weather will be cut down to that length. Large numbers of blankets have been provided, and the wounded will have no difficulty in keeping warm in their excursion northward which carries them almost into the Arctic circle.

The exchange will continue, but it will be briefly interrupted in December, when all the Swedish trains will be needed to take care of the Christmas traffic, which in Sweden is always extraordinarily heavy. The sanitary arrangements have been found to be perfectly satisfactory. The doctors in charge state that no infection of a serious character has occurred, and only one nurse has been taken ill.

The Toronto News printed a story saying that Colonel Roosevelt will address a recruiting meeting in Toronto on Dec. 11.

EXMAS ROPING AND WREATHS OF LAUREL

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Mr. A. Goldman, Victoria, Texas, says: "I am very well pleased with your medicine; am recommending it very highly. It has done more for me than anything I have ever tried."

Marshall F. W. Kennedy, of 16 Manhattan St., New York, says: "I have suffered with rheumatism for many years, have tried almost every known remedy, but got no relief or cure until I took Hill's Rheumatic Remedy. I was entirely cured and free from all pain. I send this unsolicited."

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STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DISTRICT OF BRIDGEPORT, ss., PROBATE COURT.

November 15, 1915.

Estate of Frank W. Chase, late of the town of Bridgeport in said district deceased.

The Court of Probate for the District of Bridgeport, hath limited and allowed six months from the date hereof for creditors of said Estate to exhibit their claims for settlement. Those who neglect to present their accounts, properly attested, within said time, will be barred from recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate are requested to make immediate payment to

HARRIET E. CHASE, Executrix.

200 Fairview Ave. H 23-50

STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DISTRICT OF BRIDGEPORT, ss., PROBATE COURT.

Sept. 13, 1915.

Estate of John Reilly, late of the town of Bridgeport in said district deceased.

The Court of Probate for the District of Bridgeport, hath limited and